

# The PREVENTION CONNECTION NEWSLETTER

## Saving Children from Self-Hate: *Media Literacy*

Peter DeBenedittis, Ph.D.

—In 1972, the Surgeon General said, “*The controversy is over. Watching violence makes children more aggressive.*”

**B**ehind each ad exposure is a simple message that every child internalizes: *you suck because you don't own this.*

By age 18, the average American child has seen 100,000 television commercials.

Counting logos, signs, promotions and all the other mass mediums, this figure soars to nearly twenty million. No ad-

vertising tells us we're okay—that we don't need to buy anything. Advertising tells us we're uncool, missing what's in style, too fat . . . we're too bored, too boring.

More than 4,000 scholarly studies have found that mass media *causes* societal violence. The Surgeon General wrote in 1972 that “the debate is over.” Recent research has found that more television viewing is correlated with underage drinking. Teens who see R-rated movies are three times more likely to drink and smoke. And despite all the blame that alcohol and tobacco companies put on parents—whom they depict as not doing enough during their so-called prevention spots—advertising has twice the influence on getting children

to smoke as peer pressure does. The same holds true with alcohol. Grube & Wallach (1994) found that children who are more aware of beer advertisements have more favorable attitudes toward drinking, and are more likely to report an intention to drink beer once they are adults.

Media literacy is a powerful tool to in-

oculate youth against the destructive values being sold to them. The National Office on Drug Control Policy (June 2001) reported that “because the campaign's entire strategy acknowledges the power and influence of

media on America's youth, it is important and appropriate for the initiative to help young people develop their critical thinking skills by further investing in media literacy.”

Media literacy is the ability to “read” television and mass media. Media literacy education teaches people to *access, analyze, evaluate* and *produce* media.

What makes media literacy a powerful prevention tool is that it takes children's natural tendency to rebel, and redirects it toward those trying to sell them addictive lifestyles. Media education represents a new and exciting approach to protecting youth from the unhealthy effects of media—an approach that is not dependent on

Hollywood's or Madison Avenue's willingness to accept responsibility for programming and advertising.

In conversations with some of the 50,000 students I give presentations to each year, I continually hear about the impact media literacy education can have. I've had young girls break into tears in my arms after seeing me show how actresses and models are computer enhanced in such ridiculously fake ways. I've gotten letters from ex-smokers grateful for “saving their lives” by showing how tobacco ads can manipulate teens into addiction. The im-

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**Children who understand the motivations and production techniques of media are less likely to adopt the unhealthy attitudes or behaviors depicted by mass media.**

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## The Vicki Column

*Media. Media and marketing. Media literacy. Is the medium the message? And what the heck does any of this have to do with the prevention continuum?*

As usual, we cast a broad net out over Montana in an attempt to capture a very broad topic. We wanted to bring you some *how to* information on working with the media, and to fill you in on one of the latest catch slogans—*media literacy*. We wanted to pull together philosophy and practical applications around prevention messaging, and give you some tips you'd find useful when delivering messages to diverse audiences. We also wanted to give you some snapshots of Montana programs and the way they're using media to make a difference.

I think we've accomplished what we set out to do, but what comes through in this issue—for me at least—is that media is so powerful and, in today's world, so omnipresent, that it feels more like a huge, pervasive entity than the tool it was meant to be. Retailers throw billions of dollars into

media to make sure that our children are consuming their products—some benign (*Got milk?*) many anything but. The truth is, industry works overtime—and with seemingly limitless funds—to get our children to consume far deadlier fare, from tobacco and alcohol to unhealthy food and flawed messages about what it means to be okay. The message they're selling is that if you can buy it, own it, consume it, you, too, can be . . . hip, smart, popular, beautiful. We are, without doubt, a nation of consumers and these messages come at our children as inescapably as the air they breathe.

The better we get at using this powerful *tool* and the more savvy we can make our children, the safer and healthier they will be. Tools are only as good as those who use them, and the risk of succumbing to those who would use them to hurt, not help, is only as great as our knowledge.

*Vicki Turner, Director  
Prevention Resource Center*

## Media Literacy

**M**edia violence affects children by:

- Increasing aggressiveness and antisocial behavior.
- Increasing their fear of becoming victims.
- Decreasing their sensitivity to violence and to the victims of violence.
- Increasing their appetite for more violence in entertainment and in real life.

#### **Facts about violence and the media:**

- 80 percent of the highest selling video games have violent content.
- The level of violence shown during Saturday morning cartoons is higher than the level of violence during prime time.
- Children under 8 cannot easily tell the difference between reality and fantasy. This makes violence especially damaging to young children.

— By age 18, a child will have seen 16,000 simulated murders and 200,000 acts of violence.

#### **Parents can teach their children media literacy skills by:**

- Helping them distinguish between fantasy and reality.
- Watching TV with them and discussing the violent acts and images that are portrayed. Ask children to think about what would happen in real life if the same type of violent act were committed. *Would anyone die or go to jail? Would anyone be sad? Would the violence solve the problem or create new ones?*
- Asking them how they feel after watching a violent TV show, movie, music video or video game.

Source: American Academy of Pediatrics

## Saving Children

*Continued from cover*

pack of media literacy on prevention is more than anecdotal. Post-tests from tobacco prevention talks I've given show that a third of teen smokers attending make an immediate attempt to quit.

At the 2000 Alcohol Policy XII Conference, I presented the results of a study that found that a single 45-minute presentation deconstructing alcohol advertising led to significant changes in the social expectancies middle school students had about drinking. Several peer-reviewed studies have been published that found similar results with children as young as third grade. While at Washington State University, Erica Austin (1997) published two studies showing a change in children's intention to drink alcohol after a media education program. Participating students were less likely to rate alcohol ads positively, were less attracted to alcohol promotional material and showed greater disdain for alcohol commercials.

As with alcohol prevention, researchers are beginning to find that media literacy is an effective tool in helping prevent and treat eating disorders. Stormer & Thompson (1995) found that very brief instruction in media literacy given to college women produced significant pre-to-post program reductions in appearance- and weight-related anxiety. The students were less likely to idealize the slenderness embodied by fashion models and actresses. Irving, DuPen, & Berel (1998) found that high school girls viewing a media literacy film on body image and then discussing it reported less internalization of a "thin" beauty standard and lower perceived realism of media images than did a comparison group.

Media literacy education can also reduce children's susceptibility to violence. A study conducted with English children aged eight and nine demonstrated changes in children's comprehension and awareness of media violence. In 1983, Huesmann, *et. al.* found statistically significant changes in children's attitudes about media violence through the use of media literacy. Their treatment simply consisted of two training sessions within a two-week period, during which third graders wrote essays for a video about how harmful television violence can be.

Parents and teachers can take control of the values taught to children. It doesn't take a lot of effort to teach a child to be media literate. One study found that parents who talk back to their TV sets had children who were less likely to drink in their teens. The American Academy of Pediatrics has a beautiful web site with tips for teachers and parents called Media Matters. [http://www.aap.org/family/media\\_impact.htm](http://www.aap.org/family/media_impact.htm)

The beauty of teaching media literacy for prevention is that students love learning about media. Schools embrace media literacy because students learn critical thinking skills, and if these are not reason enough, the preventive value of media literacy is not substance or behavior specific. The media literacy skills used to deconstruct and build resistance to tobacco advertising are the same used to prevent underage drinking, violence, eating disorders and other risky behaviors. I encourage you to become a cultural revolutionary and to learn about media literacy. Before our culture and our children go the way of ancient Rome, it's up to us to save them!

—Dr. DeBenedittis has consulted on using media literacy for prevention to the American Medical Association, the Centers for Disease Control, the National Office on Drug Control Policy, and the Robert Wood Johnson Foundation. His work teaching media literacy has also been featured on the CBS television show 48 Hours. For more information on trainings, presentations and curriculum materials developed by Dr. DeBenedittis, visit Media Literacy for Prevention at <http://www.media literacy.net>.



## Interagency Coordinating Council (ICC)

**Mission:** To create and sustain a coordinated and comprehensive system of prevention services in the State of Montana.

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# Notes From the Edge

## *Delivering the Bad News*

By Gail Gray, Director, Department of Public Health and Human Services

### Media Definitions

**The Media**—Most often, “the media” are lumped together as a single entity. But “the media” are actually many forms of communication . . . including newspapers, magazines, and billboards, radio, television, videocassettes, film, video games, and computer games.

<http://cmp1.ucr.edu/exhibitions/education/vidkids/medialit.html>

**Media Literacy**—Media literacy is the ability to access, analyze, evaluate and produce a variety of media texts.

<http://www.kidsplay.org/medialit.html>

Media literacy is the ability to understand how mass media work, how they produce meanings, how they are organized, and how to use them wisely. <http://cmp1.ucr.edu/exhibitions/education/vidkids/medialit.html>

**Media Vehicle**—A specific newspaper, magazine, radio station, television program, outdoor advertising location, edition of Yellow Pages or other venue that can be employed to carry advertisements or commercials. For example, New Yorker Magazine is a media vehicle in the magazine category of advertising media.

<http://www.marketingpower.com/live/mg-dictionary-view1950.php>

**Media Plan**—The process of establishing the exact media vehicles to be used for advertising, and the dates and times when the advertisements will appear.

[http://users.wbs.warwick.ac.uk/dibb\\_simkin/student/glossary/ch16.html](http://users.wbs.warwick.ac.uk/dibb_simkin/student/glossary/ch16.html)

**Media Marketing**—the process or technique of promoting, selling, and distributing a product or service through newspapers, magazines, and billboards, radio, television, videocassettes, film, video games, and computer games.

**U**nfortunately, I’ve had to deliver more than my share of bad news during my years in this office—way more than I ever would have wanted to. It never gets any easier. We’ve had to make painful cuts in programs and deep cuts to services that make a real difference in people’s lives. Because we’ve never provided services to anyone who didn’t actively *need* them, someone is hurt every time the budget forces us to take something away. Here are a few of the things I’ve learned along this very bumpy road.

1. First and always, be honest. *Always, always* tell the truth. If you don’t have credibility, you don’t have anything.
2. Put a face on the issue so you don’t leave people with the impression that you’re only thinking of numbers. You aren’t, so make sure people know the whole story.
3. Tell the people you’re impacting face to fact. This is *not* fun, but it isn’t fair if you don’t. If you’re going to sign something that impacts people, you need to talk to them—and make sure this isn’t the first and last time they see you.
4. Leave people with something to hope for. There is always hope somewhere in even the most dismal story, and people need to know what that is. Don’t exaggerate either—you sure don’t want to leave people with false hope. Again, your credibility is the most valuable tool in your toolbox.
5. If you tell the truth, people can understand even when they don’t like something.
6. Your credibility goes well beyond the people who have to live with the bad news. In a position like this one, the trust of the legislature is critical.
7. Be open to the press. Tell them the truth. Of course, you’re only human and humans occasionally make mistakes. But if you do, correct them. Immediately.
8. In many ways, the media *is* the message. You can’t deliver an effective message without the media and without the *right* media.
9. Use accessible language. Too often, our language is stuffed with acronyms. This is not conducive to communication. On the contrary, it shuts people out, which is the last thing you want to do.
10. Achieving balance is often the most difficult part of dealing with a huge set of global services that affect many, many different people dealing with dozens of different and equally difficult issues. You have to remember when you’re talking to advocacy groups that *their* issue is the most important of all in their eyes. Respect that.
11. You learn when you listen.
12. Walk the talk. If you say you’re going to do something, do it. Be timely, provide timelines and stick to them as best you can. If you say you believe in something, demonstrate it.

—Gail Gray is the director of the Montana Department of Public Health and Human Services, the largest agency in state government, comprised of approximately 350 major programs.

# Media Is *Not* the Enemy

By Kirk A. Astroth, Ph.D.

**L**ike beauty, the role of media is often in the eye of the beholder. Media is a powerful educator, entertainer and cultural influence. Media can also be a partner—but only if we start seeing it as being diverse rather than one unified conglomerate. The components of media are as different as we are.

The member organizations of the National Collaboration for Youth, including 4-H, Scouts, Boys & Girls Clubs and others, have recently entered into discussions with major media producers to advocate for a more positive portrayal of young people. Our discussions have resulted in a white paper titled “*Film, Literacy and Character Development*.” Our purpose is to:

- foster interest among children and youth in literacy and media arts with character-building messages;
- engage families and community agencies in reinforcing reading and helping youth make edifying media choices;
- informing families and youth of the “vote” they have in Hollywood by choosing to see affirming films on their opening weekends in theaters; and
- influencing the next generation of writers, filmmakers and others in media to produce character-building, socially-redeeming material.

The good news is that through this work, we have entered into a partnership with the Heartland Film Festival and its category of “Truly Moving Pictures.” In 2000, the Heartland Film Festival created the *Heartland Film Festival Truly Moving Pictures Award of Excellence* to honor films with messages that align with the festival’s mission: *To recognize and honor filmmakers whose work explores the human journey by artistically expressing hope and respect for the positive values of life.*

The Heartland Film Festival is the only film festival that honors film producers and takes pride in recognizing and recommending films that qualify as “truly moving” — films that enrich, inspire and offer hope.

You can see their seal of approval on movies such as *Whale Rider*, *Straight Story*, *Bend It Like Beckham*, *Secondhand Lions* and *Finding Nemo*.

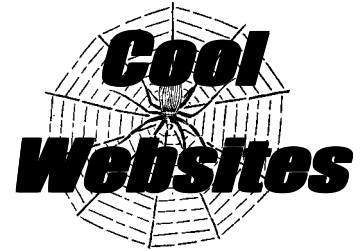
The National Collaboration for Youth is also developing criteria for identifying and highlighting films that support the goals of positive youth development. Many of these films address diversity issues including racial, ethnic, geographic, gender equality and abilities. They break down stereotypes and one-dimensional portrayals. These films portray young people:

- in positive leadership roles;
- if not in leadership roles, as positive supports to others dealing with difficult issues and decisions;
- in positive, uplifting ways;
- using analysis to solve realistic problems in positive ways;
- as part of strong families (in all its broad definitions); and
- breaking down barriers to participation in our culture.

The members of the National Collaboration for Youth are also laying the groundwork to engage at least five national organizations with sites in at least 50 communities to pilot a child- and family-focused film/reading program of great books/great films. The Collaboration hopes to develop companion curriculum materials to assist parents and educators in film/reading programs.

By taking a positive, proactive approach with Hollywood, the National Collaboration for Youth hopes to influence the kinds of movies that are produced, as well as the ways in which young people are portrayed in movies. Media can support the goals of positive youth development, but youth development professionals must help show them how.

—Visit the National Collaboration for Youth at [www.nassembly.org](http://www.nassembly.org) and the Heartland Film Festival at [www.heartlandfilmfestival.org](http://www.heartlandfilmfestival.org)



## Media and Youth

<http://www.mediawatchyouth.ca/index.php>

*MediaWatch seeks to eliminate sexism in the media and to transform how the media represents and portrays girls and women.*

<http://www.cps.ca/english/state-ments/PP/pp03-01.htm>

*This website explores the beneficial and harmful effects of media on children’s mental and physical health.*

<http://www.dailynews.lk/2003/06/27/fea04.html>

*This newspaper article talks about the WHO Study, a report on media responsibility for the increasing incidence of youth violence.*

<http://www.justthink.org/>

*Just Think is a nonprofit foundation that promotes media literacy and helps young people develop critical thinking skills.*

<http://www.media-awareness.ca/english/index.cfm>

*The Media Awareness Network provides information and resources to help teachers, parents, and community leaders promote critical thinking among young people.*

<http://www.mediafamily.org/>

*The National Institute on Media and the Family provides information to parents so they can make better media choices for their children.*

<http://pbskids.org/dontbuyit/>

*PBS Kids: Don’t Buy It provides children with the tools to evaluate the advertising and marketing that targets them.*

# Modeling Community Development

By Ken Taylor, Prevention Officer

*Community organization and development have deep roots in American history; and, indeed, have been shaped by the social and political struggles that are American history.*

## Rules for Radicals

1. *Power is not only what you have, but what the enemy thinks you have.*
2. *Never go outside the experience of your people. It may result in confusion, fear and retreat.*
3. *Wherever possible, go outside the experience of the enemy. Here you want to cause confusion, fear and retreat.*
4. *Make the enemy live up to his/her own book of rules.*
5. *Ridicule is man's most potent weapon.*
  6. *A good tactic is one that your people enjoy.*
  7. *A tactic that drags on too long becomes a drag.*
  8. *Keep the pressure on, with different tactics and actions and utilize all events of the period for your purpose.*
  9. *The threat is usually more terrifying than the thing itself.*
  10. *The major premise for tactics is the development of operations that will maintain a constant pressure upon the opposition.*
  11. *If you push a negative hard and deep enough it will break through into its counterside.*
  12. *The price of a successful attack is a constructive alternative.*
  13. *Pick the target, freeze it, personalize it and polarize it.*

Source: *Rules for Radicals* by Saul Alinsky

## **T**he Outsiders

The Outsiders Model of community organization has its origins in the struggles for social and economic justice that took place in the 1920s and '30s. Born in the Chicago of Al Capone and the Depression, it assumes unequal distribution of power and seeks to disrupt the injustice inherent to unequal distribution of power. At its core, this model assumes enemies in the community, no common ground between enemies and conflict as the primary means of change.

This approach is typified by Saul Alinsky, one of the historic figures of American organizing. His rules have been listed at left.

## Stone Soup

Do you remember the folk story about the traveler who arrived in a very poor village? The villagers said they had nothing to share, so the traveler claimed to know how to feed the whole village with a soup made of stones and water. As he started to cook, he said that although the stone soup was delicious all by itself, a few ingredients would just make it that much better. Slowly, the villagers began to appear with contributions: a few potatoes here, a bunch of carrots there . . . an old stewing hen, spices and bread, until a great feast was enjoyed by all. The Community Assets Model, one of the variations on this theme, identifies these steps: map the community assets; build relationships; mobilize for economic development and information sharing; convene the community to develop a vision and a plan; and leverage outside resources to support locally driven development.

Both models assume strength within the community. The Alinsky Model assumes that strength can be focused on outside forces that keep an unjust system in place. The Stone Soup Model assumes that resources found within the community can be used for a public good. Arguably, both approaches have a place in the public arena. There are some issues that make defining a common enemy important to achieving

the public good. There are others that make finding the common interest essential.

At least since the late 1980s, we have commonly used the community collaboration model of prevention. For the most part, this is a Stone Soup Model. We have tried to bring existing community resources to bear on issues of youth development, public education and youth access.

There were also times when we applied the Alinsky Model. This is especially true in political action. During the mid-1990s, the Center for Substance Abuse Prevention funded a series of community partnership grants across the country. In several instances, local coalitions took on "industry," using the Alinsky Model. The results were instructive. This was the beginning of rules forbidding lobbying state legislatures using dollars supplied through federal grants. At the time, stories in the news traced this change directly to attacks on "the industry"—in this case brewers and distillers. Action resulted in direct political consequences that have had widespread impact.

A good example is provided by the recent events around the clean indoor air ordinance in Helena. What seemed simple at first—forbidding indoor smoking by authority of a local vote—has become a legislative battle and a case for the Supreme Court. The decision will have ramifications for local and legislative governance far beyond the issue of clean indoor air.

The point in this discussion is: *political actions have political consequences*. We should not shy away from policy. It is with policy that we can have the largest impacts in changing unhealthy behaviors. Neither should we assume that because we see the righteousness of our causes that others do not have legitimate interests. They might also have a bit more experience in the political arena, which is not called *arena* by accident. Communities exist because there is common ground. In politics you never know who will be on your side tomorrow. You never know what will get them there. Finally, unless you are willing to listen, you won't know who would be willing to help *you* when you need it.

—Ken Taylor is the prevention officer for the Chemical Dependency Bureau. He has a MA in Education from the University of Minnesota. For the past 15 years, he has worked on prevention issues in Montana.

# The Missoula Forum

By Jori Frake, Coordinator

*"Public health is what we, as a society, do collectively to assure the conditions for people to be healthy."* Institute of Medicine, 1988

**L**ike many other Montana counties, Missoula suffers from one of the highest rates of underage drinking in the nation. Between grades 8–12, Missoula youth report 30-day use rates that are 12–17 percent above the national average, and most who report alcohol use are also reporting drinking heavily—consuming 5 or more drinks in a row (*Montana Prevention Needs Assessment and Monitoring the Future, 2002*).

The litany of risks associated with underage drinking is endless and are associated with other high-risk behaviors. Realizing this, for the past several years, the *Missoula Forum* has rallied local support to follow in the footsteps of towns and cities around the nation that have successfully reduced underage alcohol use rates.

The *Missoula Forum for Children and Youth* is an alliance of community leaders, professionals, parents, and youth united by a common mission to help Missoula grow healthy and resilient children and youth. Four coalitions operate under the Forum umbrella, all of which are developing and employing community-wide strategies that reduce risk and enhance protective factors, and promote positive youth development.

There are four coalitions within the *Forum*, each targeting specific populations or issues. They also sometimes convene ad hoc task forces to address projects of interest to all *Forum* coalitions. The strategies of coalitions and task forces complement one another and contribute crucial components to the overall prevention plan. Because so many risk behaviors share common risk and protective factors, collaboration among prevention efforts is essential. In this way, we can maximize resources and minimize overlap. Also crucial to success is a commitment to balancing “negative” prevention (reducing risk factors, preventing risk behaviors) and “positive” prevention (enhancing protective factors, promoting development assets and positive youth development). Research has shown that reducing risks and promoting health are two sides of the prevention coin, and must

be implemented simultaneously to achieve the best results.

The *Missoula Underage Substance Abuse Prevention Coalition* (MUSAP) has implemented several strategies, including conducting alcohol purchase surveys; convening meetings of community sectors to build common understanding of issues related to underage drinking and to identify particular prevention strategies; advertising changes in the MIP law; providing counterpoint information to local newspaper articles that indicate a lack of understanding of the dangers of underage drinking; and finally, collecting and disseminating local data.

MUSAP also streamlines and enhances prevention, treatment, enforcement, and justice efforts related to underage drinking by working closely with its member agencies. For example, MUSAP worked with the City of Missoula Police Department on its successful application for an *Enforcing Underage Drinking Laws* grant from the Montana Board of Crime Control. This grant provides for the initiation of compliance checks, expanded party patrols and increased police attention to the use of fake IDs. It will also allow MUSAP and the University of Montana to bridge the gap between campus and community in educating Missoulians and U of M students about the consequences of underage drinking. This fall, MUSAP will launch its *Year of the Family* initiative to educate parents and siblings about their roles as prevention advocates and to promote protective factors in the family.

While MUSAP’s efforts are crucial, they would not be enough in isolation. Successful prevention requires that multiple sectors of the community employ multiple, continuous strategies in multiple settings. One of the most important results of the Forum’s work is the sense of community that such collaboration promotes. We serve youth better when we can demonstrate what it means to work together.

**Question:** What’s the biggest deterrent to your teen using alcohol and other drugs?

**Answer:** You. Research shows that parents are the #1 influence on teens’ decisions to use or not use alcohol, tobacco, and other drugs.

## Parenting IS Prevention

*Close family relationships help prevent risk behaviors, like drug use. Other protective factors in the family to look for:*

- Family shares responsibilities, including chores and decision making;
- Family members are nurturing and support each other;
- Parenting is consistent;
- Parents set clear expectations and limits regarding alcohol and other drug use;
- Family copes with stress in a positive way;
- Parents encourage supportive relationships with caring adults beyond the family; and
- Education is valued, encouraged and supported.

## The Forum

*Within the Forum, the Healthy Start Council focuses on families with children aged birth to six. The Youth Development Network promotes activities that build protective factors for youth. The Missoula Adolescent Pregnancy, Parenting and Prevention Services coalition (MAPPPS) and the Missoula Underage Substance Abuse Prevention coalition (MUSAP) build community strategies to reduce the incidence of specific risk behaviors.*

# Media and Juvenile Offenders

By Bj Hawkins

— In Meagher County, juvenile offenders don't pick up trash, they make television.

## Popular Teen Shows

There were 289,381 ads on network, local and cable television in 2002 - a 39 percent jump from 2001. Industry spending on ads grew by 22 percent to more than \$990 million. The study by Georgetown University's Center on Alcohol Marketing and Youth was released in April 2004 and revealed that teens were more likely than adults to have seen 66,218 of the ads, a 30 percent increase since 2001.

Some of the biggest spenders on such ads were beer companies, led by Heineken and Miller Lite. All 15 of the shows most popular among teens included alcohol ads, according to this study. Survivor, Fear Factor and That '70s Show were among those with the most ads. <http://camy.org/>

The opinions expressed herein are not necessarily those of the Prevention Resource Center and the Addictive and Mental Disorders Division of the Montana Department of Public Health and Human Services.

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**T**he media is often blamed for the problems plaguing our youth, but in Meagher County, juvenile offenders use the media to create public service announcements (PSAs) that communicate the consequences of high risk behaviors to other teens.

In 1998, Matt LaPierre, VISTA, Donna Marmon, Probation Officer, 14<sup>th</sup> Judicial District and Bj Hawkins, Meagher County Public Television, created the Juvenile Accountability Group (JAG). The initial premise of JAG was to see if recidivism could be curtailed or prevented by giving young offenders the opportunity to help other youth, using television as a medium. JAG also addressed other small town problems, including lack of supervision and the quality of available community service opportunities. Juveniles engaged in meaningful work—and creating television spots is meaningful—are less likely to reoffend. JAG also put youth in contact with caring adults.

Youth who are court ordered to JAG begin with a private intake interview with JAG instructors. During the interview, each youth fills out a *Circle of Consequences* worksheet. Designed to help youth think beyond their violation, they must name 15 possible consequences of the behavior that landed them in JAG. After completion of the worksheet, youth proceed to *Montana Codes Annotated* online, where they read and paraphrase the entire code for their particular offenses.

When all youth have completed the intake interviews, a date is set to begin the group sessions. The group has three months or less to finish their PSA. During these sessions; youth analyze existing PSAs and commercials, brainstorm common teenage issues, increase their media literacy, learn basic camera and editing skills, research the topic and produce the PSA. Completed PSAs are broadcast on Meagher County Public Television and are

sent to *Listen Up!* for inclusion on [www.listenup.org](http://www.listenup.org). Youth have the option of starring in their own PSA or getting other youth to serve as actors. The group must develop a storyboard, scripts, scout locations, and acquire props, media releases for actors and locations, rehearse, tape and edit the PSA. They often work with the law enforcement officers who cite them.

Sometimes only one youth will be cited—or a youth under age 14 may be age inappropriate for inclusion in a high school JAG group. In response, there is currently a PSA print ad project that can be completed by a single participant.

Over the six years of the program, youth have produced PSAs on smoking, drinking, drugs, relationships, teenage pregnancy and parenting, community involvement, felony theft, gender equity, bullying and a variety of other topics.

After they've completed JAG, and as funding is available, youth may apply for jobs at Meagher County Public Television through the Human Resource Development Council's (HRDC) *Workforce Investment Act* program. The HRDC is located in Bozeman and coordinated by Lyn Rodgers. Youth selected for this program continue to develop their skills by working at the television station. Monthly workshops pre-

sented by Rodgers provide the knowledge to secure jobs and to help youth become productive members of the workforce.

All JAG members are tracked for two years after completion of the PSA.

Between 1998-2003, 83 percent of JAG participants did *not* reoffend with new or repeat violations. Clearly, making juvenile offenders *part* of the media has been a successful way to assist youth in completing their community service requirements in an innovative and productive way.

—Bj Hawkins is the Meagher County Public Television, Inc. station manager. The JAG program is funded in part by the Montana Board of Crime Control, Meagher County and Meagher County Public Television, Inc. For more information, contact Bj Hawkins at 406-547-3791.

**Research has shown the significance of meaningful work and contact with caring adults in helping youth change their behavior.**



# Food for Thought

By Kirk A. Astroth, Ph.D.

**T**he other day, a flyer landed on my desk from the National Institute of Child Health and Human Development promoting a new initiative called “Media Smart Youth.” *Here we go again*, I thought, *same old, same old*. And then, *haven’t we moved beyond this the “let’s blame the kids” campaign?* While the goal of the program is laudable, the campaign harkens back to the negative, blame-based strategies of the past. Now that we’ve blamed young people for all manner of social evils from substance abuse to teen pregnancies, we are moving on to blame them for America’s weight problems. When in doubt, blame the kids.

This NIH campaign seeks to address obesity in youth by focusing on helping 11-13 year olds understand how media can influence their lives. In my opinion, there are two things wrong with this approach.

**First**, let’s start with the kids. Kids are what they eat. Last time I did a reality check, I didn’t see a lot of 11-13 year olds shopping in my local grocery store. I did see their parents. I also don’t see many kids driving to fast food outlets, but their parents are at the wheel. Why aren’t we focusing on parents and the everyday food choices they are making for their families? Blaming kids for their obesity is kind of like blaming them for respiratory problems brought on by breathing their parents’ secondhand smoke. We’re targeting the wrong group if we want to see immediate change, because how effective can educational efforts directed to kids be if parents continue to buy and dispense junk food?

And when it comes to kids, let’s put this in proper perspective. While I am not advocating that obesity is okay for anyone, the truth is that 87 percent of youth are NOT obese. A broad, non-targeted prevention

campaign delivering obesity messages to all youth misses the intended audience. What is the campaign doing to focus on the 13 percent who *are* overweight?

**Second**, let’s look at media. The purpose of “Media Smart Youth” is to address childhood obesity by focusing on media’s influence on the health and fitness of young people. According to this flyer, American children and youth over age eight spend more than six hours a day using media. By age 13, the average young person has seen about 15,000 hours of television. What this flyer fails to mention is that despite the rising use of the internet (in schools, libraries and homes) and other forms of entertainment, these figures have not changed substantially over the past twenty years.<sup>1</sup> I’m

a little surprised, given the popularity of the internet, but if the amount of time spent with media hasn’t changed in two decades, is media *really* the

problem? Maybe it’s time to go back to parents’ dietary—and other—choices.

While educating youth to be discerning critics of propaganda is admirable, perhaps a better strategy might be to focus on the producers of such media rather than the consumers. Again, we seem eager to blame the kids without focusing on those who produce the ads, entertainment, and implicit messages which some media carry. Perhaps this should be our food for thought?

—Kirk Astroth is a youth development specialist at the Montana 4-H Center for Youth Development.

**According to the U.S. Surgeon General, nearly 13 percent of children between the ages of 6-11 and 14 percent of youth between the ages of 12-19 are overweight.**

## Food, Health and Body Image

### Media Literacy Community Action Team

*Obesity is the second leading cause of preventable death in the United States. It is also the most prevalent nutritional disease among children. Think that TV, advertisements, music videos and other types of media don’t have an effect on the foods kids prefer? How they see themselves? How healthy they are? Think again!*

- According to the Center for Disease Control and Prevention, 15 percent of 6–19 year olds are overweight.
- High screen time is associated with obesity, according to the American Academy of Pediatrics.
- The amount of money spent on food advertising has more than doubled in the last 10 years.
- Fast food outlets spend \$3 billion in television ads targeted to children.
- The average American child sees 10,000 food advertisements on TV annually, or about 18 per day.
- A study of children aged 6–8 found that 70 percent believe fast foods are healthier than foods from the home.
- Media can promote an unrealistic image of how people look. Often, the thin and perfect-looking person on screen or in print is not even one whole person, but parts of several people.
- 20 years ago, models weighed 8 percent less than the average woman. Now they weigh 23 percent less.

Source: Missoula Forum for Children and Youth. Article by Anneke Jansen. (ajansen@co.missoula.mt.us)

<sup>1</sup> “In 1981, the A.C. Nielsen Company announced that the average American television set is on for forty-three hours and fifty-two minutes a week. That’s more than six hours a day.” Dolores Curran, *Traits of a Healthy Family* (NY: Ballantine Books, 1983). p. 43.

# Keeping Families Connected

By Deborah Kottel

## Why turn off the TV?

*Television cuts into family time, harms our children's ability to read and succeed in school, and contributes to unhealthy lifestyles and obesity. Here are a few of the facts:*

*— On average, children in the US will spend more time in front of the television (1,023 hours) than in school this year (900 hours).*

*— 40% of Americans frequently or always watch television during dinner.*

*— As US Surgeon General Dr. David Satcher said at the Kick Off of TV-Turnoff Week 2001, "We are raising the most overweight generation of youngsters in American history . . . This week is about saving lives."*

*Source: the TV Turnoff Network:  
[www.tvturnoff.org/week.htm](http://www.tvturnoff.org/week.htm)*

**F**amily memories . . . times spent together . . . stories read before bedtime . . . a plate of cookies and carrots left out for Santa and his reindeer . . . these are the building blocks of childhood. Family memories make families whole. They are what people are left with long after gifts have been opened and toys broken and forgotten.

Three years ago, the students at the University of Great Falls began a Christmas outreach program designed to help inmates remain connected with their families during the holidays. They wanted the children of inmates to know their parents think of them. Parents at the Great Falls Prerelease Center were invited to tape record a message and a Christmas story that would be sent to their children. Tapes were recorded of parents sitting in front of a decorated Christmas tree in a big easy chair, reading a Christmas story of their choosing. Sometimes Santa even drops by to say hello to the children.

After the tape is recorded, we wrap and mail it with a personal card from Mom or Dad. This connection with a parent gone is a very special present under the tree. The hope is the child will replay the story at bedtime and listen to his/her parent's voice before going to sleep. It's working. Parents tell us that their kids call and say they watch the tape every night.

When we began the program, some of the inmate parents seemed to hang back

and, even though they'd said they wanted to participate, at the last moment, they'd refuse to do the tape. It occurred to me then that there are many adults in the criminal justice system who have serious learning/reading disabilities. The next year we told inmates that they could read a story *or* just talk to their children. Participation doubled.

During one taping, a man hung around at the back of the group. When his turn finally came he seemed reluctant to participate. I offered him our book of Christmas stories, but he refused it. Instead, he sat down and began by naming each of his children. He bowed his head and said simply, "I love you," then read a poem he had written. It was about regrets and mistakes—but also about hope and new beginnings. After he finished, he said each child's name again and, with head bowed and voice barely above a whisper, "*I think of you every minute of every day.*"

A video camera, a tape and some wrapping paper are all that is needed to create memories during the holidays for the families of inmates. Undoubtedly, the tape is important for the child who receives it, but I've also watched inmates in tears after they finish recording and know that these parents are remembering what they've given up—and realizing what they may be building to go back to.

*—Deborah Kottel is the Dean of Graduate Studies and Distance Learning at the University of Great Falls. She can be reached at [dkottel@ugf.edu](mailto:dkottel@ugf.edu).*

## 9 Tips for Speaking to the Media During Crisis

By Eric Aakko

1. Be knowledgeable and credible.
2. Establish relationships with the media early—a crisis is a bad time to exchange business cards.
3. Develop two or three key messages you want to communicate to the public.
4. Be consistent with your message.
5. Be empathetic and calm.
6. Dress like a professional.
7. Talk like a professional—don't babble. Maintain eye contact.
8. Develop a fact sheet for the media—list key points and define all terms.
9. Be open and honest. If you don't know something, it's okay to admit it.

*—Eric Aakko, M.S., is the Bioterrorism Training Coordinator for the Department of Public Health & Human Services and an adjunct communications instructor for UM-Helena.*

## Writing and Distributing News Releases

By Gayle Shirley, Public Information Officer, Department of Public Health and Human Services

### 1. Evaluate your message.

- a. Is it newsworthy?
- b. Is it for the general public? Or a specific segment of the public?
- c. Is it timely? Tied to a specific event?
- d. Would it best be conveyed in a news release? Letter to the editor? Guest editorial?
- b. Send your article to the right place.
- c. Distribute by e-mail or fax when possible.
- d. Don't send it out too soon or too late.
- e. If your article was important and it hasn't appeared, consider contacting the editor/news director to make sure it didn't get lost—but do this sparingly.

### 2. Write your news release.

- a. Include a release date and who to contact for more information.
- b. The lead: It should sum up what your article is about and why it's important.
- c. It should catch readers' attention and give them a reason to keep reading.
- d. The body of the article should answer the questions: Who, what, when, where, why and how.
- e. Include a quote or two from an appropriate source, but not in the lead.
- f. Use everyday language.
- g. Use active verbs.
- h. Keep sentences and paragraphs short.
- i. Keep adverbs and adjectives to a minimum.
- j. Avoid clichés.
- k. Watch out for dangling modifiers.
- l. Double-check your spelling, grammar, punctuation. A second set of eyes is a good idea.
- m. Double-check your facts.
- f. In some cases, contact the editor/news director in advance.
- g. Consider a letter to the editor or guest editorial. Be sure to get guidelines.
- h. There's no point getting angry at the media. You can't win a public relations fight with the person controlling the medium.
- i. When the media make a mistake, think twice about correcting them. Is there something to be gained—other than personal satisfaction?

### 3. Distribute your news release.

- a. Make a contact list of news/city editors, news directors, assignment editors, reporters. Keep it up to date.

## Prevention Connection

**Speaking of news . . . do you have something to add to the Prevention Connection conversation?**

**Our upcoming issues are: Women & Girls, with articles due at the end of June; and Kids Facing Extraordinary Challenges, with articles due at the end of August.**

**Let us know if you have an idea. E-mail: [vturner@state.mt.us](mailto:vturner@state.mt.us)**

## MEDIA RELATIONS 101

### Communicating with Reporters

*Reporters are not your friends; reporters are not your enemies.*

*Find out which reporters cover your area of interest. Make a contact list.*

*Don't forget the broadcast media: radio and TV. Don't forget the weeklies. Don't forget the specialty press and organization newsletters.*

*Know what you want to say. For broadcast media, figure out how to say it in 15 seconds or less. Think sound bites.*

*Be sure to tell the reporter who, what, where, when, why and how.*

*Use everyday language. Communication is all about being understood.*

*Never speculate, guess or assume. When you don't know something, say so. Better yet, offer to find out and get back to the reporter—then be sure you do!*

*Don't say "No Comment;" you'll look like you're trying to hide something.*

*If you don't know what you're talking about, stop talking.*

*Never, ever lie! As in all parts of life, lies catch up with you and destroy trust.*

Gayle Shirley, Public Information Officer, DPHHS

# Getting Your Message Across: *Make it Easy to Read*

By Jan Lombardi and Melanie Reynolds

“Easy-to-read materials are for everyone—from business executives to high school students. Everyone benefits from materials that are clear and concise.”—*You Can Prepare Easy-to-Read Materials*, Center for Substance Abuse Prevention (CSAP) Communications Team

## SMOG Readability Formula

The SMOG Readability Formula is quick, simple and especially useful for shorter materials. To calculate reading level, follow these steps:

1. Count 10 consecutive sentences near the beginning, the middle and the end of the text. If the text has fewer than 30 sentences, use all.
2. Count the number of words containing 3 or more syllables (polysyllabic), including repetitions of the same word.
3. Look up the approximate grade level on the SMOG conversion table below:

Total Polysyllabic Word Count	Approximate Grade Level (+1.5 Grades)
1-6	5
7-12	6
13-20	7
21-30	8
31-42	9
43-56	10
57-72	11
73-90	12
91-110	13
111-132	14
133-156	15
157-182	16
183-210	17
211-240	18

Source: Office of Science Policy and Technology Transfer. <http://www.cdc.gov/od/ads/smog.htm>



Are you worried that writing for low-level readers will come across as condescending? Rest assured that writing in an easy-to-read format is about clarity, organization and appearance. It is not about “dumbing down” the text. Even highly educated people can lose their ability to process information when they are upset, stressed or sick. Written materials that are clear and simple are best for any audience.

**“The average reading level of adult Americans is the 8th to 9th grade. However, one out of five read at the 5th grade level or below.”**

**—Cecilia and Leonard Doak, 1995**

In addition to using the *You Can Prepare Easy-to-Read Materials* five-step approach, the authors have included their own helpful hints and professional experience to help you develop easy-to-read materials.

1. **Determine who you want to reach**—The first step is to identify your target audience. Before you begin, you must define your target audience and understand their needs. The more clearly you understand and relate to their concerns, the more likely they are to listen to what you have to say.
2. **Decide what you want your audience to do**—You should know *exactly* what you want your audience to do after they have read your message. If you don’t know, how will they? Before you begin writing, list the action steps you’d like readers to take. When you finish writing, have someone else read it through to identify the action steps. You’ll know if your message got across.

Think about how the materials will be used. In what settings will they be distributed? Do you need a cover

letter or instructions for the person who will give the materials to the client? If your material is self-instructional, you may need to be more specific in your instructions.

3. **Choose the right reading level**—For the general public, writing at the sixth grade reading level is usually safe. You can check if you’re on target by using a readability test such as the SMOG or the Fry Readability Formula. These are easy, tried and true methods for grading the readability of written materials. There is also a reading-level test built into Microsoft Word.

Readability is more than reading level. It is how your material is laid out on the paper. The font and use of pictures can make materials easy to read. The motivation and interest of the reader and their background and familiarity with the topic all help make your message understandable.

4. **Write easy-to-read materials**—Easy-to-read materials are well organized with key points, simple format, and a clear writing style. To keep materials understandable, choose simpler words whenever possible and either explain complex words in the text or consider a simple glossary of unfamiliar terms.

Give the readers what they need to know and delete the information that is *nice* to know. Cramping too much information into a publication turns readers off.

Speak to your audience in simple, familiar language. While a conversational style works well for many

**Continued on Page 13**

## Getting Your Message Across

*Continued from Page 8*

young people, older people—particularly for serious health-related materials—may expect formal grammar. Carefully test any humor you include.

Here are some other tips to help improve writing:

- **Use an active voice.** “Most fourth graders don’t try wine coolers” works better than “Wine coolers are not tried by most fourth graders.”
- **Put your message in the subheadings.** Readers may only scan the headings and subheadings in a publication. Read through to ensure that headlines tell the story without the supporting text.
- **Vary sentence length, but keep most sentences fairly short (8 to 10 words).**
- **Summarize frequently and repeat your main points to enhance comprehension.**
- **Use no more than five items in a list.** Use bullets or numbered lists to break up blocks of text.

**5. Create clear graphics**—Present text in a way that enhances readability and uses illustrations to reinforce your message. Visuals can also help convey the message or emphasize specific points, and many readers prefer them to plain text. However, make sure that the visuals serve a purpose. Don’t use graphics to decorate the page—it just distracts the reader.

To improve readability:

- **Help readers by using large, easily readable type.** Serif typefaces (those with small edges on vertical letters) are easier to read than sans serif (“without serif”) type. Also, use large type of 12 or 14 points.
- **Present information in an inviting format.** Keep the right margin uneven or “ragged” rather than forcing it into a straight (justified) edge.

- **Keep a lot of white space on each page.** A solid block of text is uninviting to the reader.
- **Don’t let graphic elements dilute the impact of your message.** For example, avoid vertical alignment of letters or reverse lettering because they are hard to read. Use highly contrasting colors for paper and ink (i.e., black, brown, or very dark blue ink on white, buff, or yellow paper).
- **Show pictures only of what you want readers to do.** Pictures are remembered—sometimes better than words—so show only the right way to act. Put your message in a caption under each picture.
- **When illustrating a process, keep the steps in order** from left to right and top to bottom. Label each step clearly using numbers or arrows to show the progression.

—*Jan Lombardi and Melanie Reynolds have worked in a variety of non-profit and governmental venues and believe in using easy-to-read materials to promote educational and public health issues affecting Montana’s communities. They have worked together on multi-state regional social marketing campaign, and have both done community-level outreach and marketing.*

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Doak, Cecilia and Leonard, and Root, Jane H. *Teaching Patients With Low Literacy Skills*. Philadelphia, J.B.Lippincott, 1985.

Office of Cancer Communications, National Cancer Institute. *Making Health Communication Programs Work: A Planners Guide*, 1989. <http://www.jointogether.org/sa/resources/database/reader/0,1884,568898,00.html> This guide to all aspects of health communications, including readability and qualitative research, describes the SMOG readability formula and includes sample pretest instruments.

National Clearinghouse for Alcohol and Drug in its *You Can Prepare Easy-to-Read Material* (<http://www.health.org/govpubs/MS499/>)

### When using the SMOG formula:

- *A sentence is defined as a string of words punctuated with a period, an exclamation mark, or a question mark. Consider long sentences with a semi-colon as two sentences.*
- *Hyphenated words are considered as one word.*
- *Numbers that are written should be counted. If written in numeric form, they should be pronounced to determine if they are polysyllabic.*
- *Proper nouns, if polysyllabic, should be counted.*
- *Abbreviations should be read as though unabbreviated to determine if they are polysyllabic. However, abbreviations should be avoided unless commonly known.*

Source: Office of Science Policy and Technology Transfer. <http://www.cdc.gov/od/ads/smog.htm>

## Communication Tips: *Getting the Word OUT*

by Kristin Neill, Lewistown Boys & Girls Club VISTA

### Effective Networking

#### **Seven Secrets of Effective Networking**

<http://www.charliecook.net/>

#### **Top 7 Networking Strategies**

<http://top7business.com/archives/success/091498.html>

### Community Development

#### **University of Kansas—**

*Community Tool Box*

<http://ctb.ku.edu/>

#### **The Association for Community Health Improvement**

[http://www.hospitalconnect.com/  
DesktopServlet](http://www.hospitalconnect.com/DesktopServlet)

#### **Connecticut Assets Network (CAN)—**

*a grassroots nonprofit network  
promoting the integration and  
successful use of asset-based  
strategies for community development.*  
<http://www.ctassets.org/index.cfm>

When it comes to eliciting community support, increasing awareness or making a statement, the local media can be one of the best and most economical tools available—if you know how to use it. From a former managing editor and reporter for a Montana community newspaper, here are ten tips for working with the media:

1. **Utilize news briefs and community calendars.** Most newspapers and radio stations offer a section or time slot for meeting announcements, event information or other short news items. Provide the who, what, when, where and how, and the media will do the rest, usually without charge.
2. **Plan ahead.** Respect the scheduling needs of editors and radio station managers. All media outlets have deadlines. Find out what they are and make sure you get your information to them early. Don't call the paper and ask them to cover your event on the morning it's happening, especially on a weekend!
3. **Talk to the right person.** Don't assume your message will get to the right person. Find out who does what in the news room and make an appointment to visit with him/her personally.
4. **Use the correct format.** Ask how the media outlet prefers to receive information and use that method, whether phone, e-mail, fax, postal service or personal delivery. Avoid typing in all caps unless requested to do so.
5. **Write it yourself.** A busy reporter appreciates anything that makes the job easier. Write simple news releases yourself, understanding that they are likely to be edited. Proofread and spell-check. Include all the important information. Make it easy to publish and chances are that it will be.
6. **Cultivate relationships with the news staff.** A reporter who knows you and understands what you're trying to accomplish is more likely to go the extra mile to help get your message out. Be friendly and sincere.
7. **Know the difference between news and advertising.** Understand and respect the need for media outlets to draw a line between news and advertising. Advertising is a significant source of revenue—don't expect free publicity without being able to justify why it should be free. Find out the media outlet's policies and respect them.
8. **Put yourself in their shoes.** There could be many reasons your news item didn't get published. Don't take it personally. Understand that placement, timing, story length and many other elements depend upon a variety of factors beyond the story itself.
9. **Keep it interesting.** It is the newspaper's or radio station's job to inform *and* entertain the audience. Make the effort to point out what is most interesting about your work or to suggest a unique story angle.
10. **Ask for what you want.** You need to do more than just let the media know what's happening. If you would like to see a reporter at your event or would appreciate a preview story, ask for it. You may not get what you want, but your chances are better than if you rely on hope or past experience.

# The D.C. Connection

By Theresa Racicot

*"Research clearly indicates that, in addition to parents and peers, alcohol advertising and marketing have a significant impact on youth decisions to drink."<sup>6</sup> (Center on Alcohol Marketing and Youth Fact Sheet)*

**T**he tragic deaths of two 11-year-old children in Ronan have inspired me to share my thoughts with you about the issue of childhood drinking and my experience in working with *Leadership to Keep Children Alcohol Free*, a unique coalition of governors' spouses, federal agencies and public and private organizations. Our goal is to prevent the use of alcohol by children ages 9 to 15. As First Lady of Montana, I had the privilege of being invited to join several organizations dedicated to children's health. Since I truly believe that America's complacency about underage drinking gambles with our children's lives, I accepted the invitation to join *Leadership* in January 2000. The initiative has the potential to strengthen the protection of our children at the national policy level.

Even though drinking is often viewed as a normal part of growing up, its known health and economic consequences negate this notion. The impact of early alcohol use is clear. Research proves that children who drink are: more likely to suffer depression, at greater risk of suicide, at greater risk of physical injury, more likely to have unprotected sex, more likely to be violent and at greater risk of alcohol abuse or dependence later in life. Data from national studies show that more than one-fifth of 8<sup>th</sup> graders have been drunk at least once, and almost one-fourth of 9<sup>th</sup> graders report having had five or more drinks in a row in the past month (binge drinking).<sup>1</sup> Among 9<sup>th</sup> graders, girls consume alcohol and binge drink at rates almost equal those of boys.<sup>2</sup> Given that 40 percent of individuals who start drinking before the age of 13 will develop alcohol abuse or alcohol dependence at some point in their lives, the scope and severity of the problem is staggering.<sup>3</sup>

The 2003 *Montana Youth Risk Behavior Survey* for Grades 7-8 provides a snapshot of the challenge we face in our state: 27 percent of the 7<sup>th</sup> and 8<sup>th</sup> graders surveyed said they'd had at least one drink of alcohol during the 30 days prior to the survey. Of those who'd had a drink, 26 percent were younger than nine when they had

their first. Additionally, 15 percent of the 7<sup>th</sup> and 8<sup>th</sup> graders surveyed reported binge drinking at least once during the past month.<sup>4</sup>

Today's youth are growing up in a culture that heavily promotes alcohol use. Children are bombarded with images from across the media spectrum - television, the internet, movies, even toys. Drinking is generally presented in a positive light, while images of the risks and negative consequences are seldom portrayed at all. Given the pervasiveness of pro-alcohol messages, alcohol prevention education and healthy images of non-use are more important than ever, and must begin as early as age 7 or 8.

The *Leadership* initiative is proud to collaborate with several national organizations in its efforts to achieve these goals; these partnerships include the American Medical Association and the office of the US Surgeon General. Since the September 2003 release of the Institute of Medicine (IOM) Report, *Reducing Underage Drinking: A Collective Responsibility*, the *Leadership* and other national prevention organizations have been working together to support the recommendations of the report, in which "the preeminent goal . . . is to create and sustain a broad societal commitment to reduce underage drinking."

Responsibility for the health of our children lies with all of us—family members, schools and universities, communities, alcohol producers, policy makers, media, medical professionals, opinion leaders—anyone in a position to affect youths' decisions. As Co-chair of *Leadership's* Emeritus Group (comprised of former Governors' spouses), I am pleased to continue this important work. If we each do our part, the solution is within our reach.

*Editor's Note: Theresa Racicot is the former First Lady of Montana, and she has graciously agreed to provide regular contributions to the Prevention Connection. Watch upcoming editions for the DC Connection.*



## **The Leadership initiative has four primary goals:**

- 1) to make prevention of alcohol use by children a national priority;
- 2) to focus the attention of state and national policymakers and opinion leaders on the seriousness of the early onset of alcohol use;
- 3) to educate the public about the incidence and impact of early alcohol use by children 9 to 15 years of age; and
- 4) to energize Americans to address these issues within their families, schools, and communities in a sustained way and to work for change.

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# Clarity Works

By Bill Lombardi

*Know your audience, know your mission, tell your story . . . make a difference.*

## Four simple principles can guide you in all your communications strategies:

- **Know your audience**—who they are and what they want;
- **Know your mission**—what you do, communicated in simple, concrete terms and images;
- **Tell your story** in simple terms; and
- **Make a difference** by showing your audience the benefits you provide.

**Media is not inherently bad or good, it is just a means to persuade and convey information.**

**“C**larity.” That’s what a reporter from a major newspaper said her editor wanted in all the paper’s stories.

Make it simple, clear, easy to understand.

*Clarity.* Like the peal of a church bell, the word rings in the mind.

The editor’s direction was plain: Let the readers—the target audience—understand the story so that they don’t have to work hard or guess at its meaning, and, ultimately, they’ll continue to buy a product they value. That’s the beauty of great messages: simplicity and clarity.

These principles are essential in conveying a message to an audience whose attention span is as short as the time it takes to change TV channels. And these principles are applicable to all types of communication—from radio, TV, writing, e-mails, advertisements, brochures, mission statements, government rules and regulations, PowerPoint presentations and political campaigns to sermons.

People are more likely to pay attention to what you have to say if they clearly understand your message, but lots of things can get in the way, from media to everyday chores. You can build a communications strategy around four simple steps.

First, *know your audience*—who they are, what they want and how they receive messages.

Today, political candidates, corporations, environmental organizations, nonprofit groups—you name it—poll the public in an effort to understand their attitudes and find ways to shape opinion. Pollsters also use focus groups—a panel of people who are considered part of a target audience—to further determine that audience’s opinions, wants and needs and the ways they would favorably receive a message.

This kind of systematic approach to understanding your audience and developing the message is pertinent in a world where we’re constantly bombarded with all kinds of useful—and meaningless—information.

Second, *know your mission*—the central reason you exist and how you provide value or a benefit to your target audience.

Taken together, these concepts provide the pillars upon which all communications

strategies are built. You have a mission to do something—that is, provide a benefit to a target audience—and you must communicate the benefit and value of that mission to that your audience.

Businesses, nonprofits and government agencies alike craft simple mission statements that provide an overall framework to guide employees in their jobs and to demonstrate the benefits they offer.

Here’s one mission statement:

“The mission of our organization is to promote the interests of nonprofit organizations that primarily serve residents by providing housing, health care and community services; to enhance our members’ ability to provide quality services efficiently and effectively; and to represent our members through cooperative action.”

*Simple? Clear? Concise?*

Not really.

Consider another example:

“An emergency homeless shelter and soup kitchen serving the poor and homeless in the area: Food. Clothing. Shelter.”

This mission is clear, concise and contains concrete words—food, clothing, shelter—that an audience can quickly grasp, picture and understand.

Third, *tell your story* in simple terms, with simple words, pictures and images so that your audience knows exactly what you do and your message is easily conveyed with no guesswork involved.

And finally, *make a difference* by showing your audience the real benefits that you provide.

These concepts can get lost in a world of information and a sense that you have to be complex to survive in a complicated world. But the genius of great communication is clarity—making the complex seem simple, or pulling the obvious from the clutter.

And, by the way, the newspaper where that reporter works just won five Pulitzer Prizes—journalism’s top prize and the second greatest number of Pulitzers accrued in the 87-year history of the awards.

Clearly . . . clarity works.

—Bill Lombardi operates a consulting firm in Helena that works with organizations, government and business to develop strategic communications plans. Bill can be reached at Lombardi Strategic Communications, 406-459-8860, or by e-mail at [bill@billlombardi.com](mailto:bill@billlombardi.com).



# What's Media Literacy Got To Do With It?

By Dorothy Bradshaw, Lewis & Clark Tobacco Use Prevention Program

**M**edia is a powerful force in our lives. So powerful and pervasive that many of us, youth in particular, do not perceive its influence on our decisions about what to do, what to buy or how we define ourselves.

More and more people involved in prevention and public health have become aware of the fact that being trained in media literacy is a necessary addition to the arsenal of tools we give our kids to increase resiliency and encourage healthy life choices. The Centers for Disease Control names media literacy as a "Best Practice" and includes it as an integral part of comprehensive school tobacco prevention programs. Schools have also realized the importance of expanding literacy to include skills beyond reading and writing. In Montana, curriculum standards require schools to teach media literacy skills.

The Lewis and Clark County Tobacco Use Prevention Program has put a media literacy program in place in our service area. We reviewed numerous resources and developed an hour-long presentation on media literacy and tobacco prevention. We piloted the program with 27 summer school students at C.R. Anderson Middle School in June 2003. Interest was high, with a post test demonstrating that 69 percent of the kids attending believed they would be less influenced by tobacco advertising as a result of the presentation.

Working with staff at Helena's high schools, we designed a curriculum to train over 50 peer mentors to offer media literacy presentations to elementary and middle school students. The training includes a history of the tobacco industry in the United States, the latest research on tobacco and its effects, how to teach media literacy, an overview of local tobacco prevention policy and an introduction to ways kids can use media to educate the community.

Usually, when the "tobacco prevention ladies" come to call, there are some rolled eyes. Not at these high schools. Even some students who smoke have taken this project to heart. The students we've trained have already made media literacy presentations to over 500 of their younger peers. *Is it needed?* Local peer mentors held up a box

of cigarettes, covering all but the top red and white inch. "What are these?" they asked the 4<sup>th</sup> and 5<sup>th</sup> graders. "Marlboros!" yelled the kids. In a very unscientific poll taken during the presentations, kids were asked what percentage of all adults smoke. The *lowest* answer we got was 60 percent. It's actually closer to 22 percent. Kids live in a world where they are led to believe that most adults smoke. Major movie characters are three times more likely to smoke than people in real life. Tobacco companies pay big bucks to get their products up on the screen. It works, too.

To our amazement, the involvement of the peer mentors has not stopped at presentations. These kids are learning about tobacco and the risks of its uses *and* learning skills that make them more successful as students and community members. Fourth and fifth graders produced tobacco counter ads that were displayed in several locations around the community during the *Great American Smokeout*. High school students paired up with elementary and middle school students to produce radio and television public service announcements that have aired on local stations.

Students have also gotten involved in tobacco prevention policy as a result of the media literacy training. A Helena High student was nominated to be the Youth Representative on Montana's Tobacco Advisory Board, and two Capital High students were part of a day-long workshop to design Montana's Tobacco Prevention Strategic Plan. Another group of Capital High students has submitted a grant to produce a billboard to counter tobacco advertising.

Working through media literacy, we've seen kids take a huge interest in doing something to prevent tobacco use. They've learned the risks and have produced credible media projects.

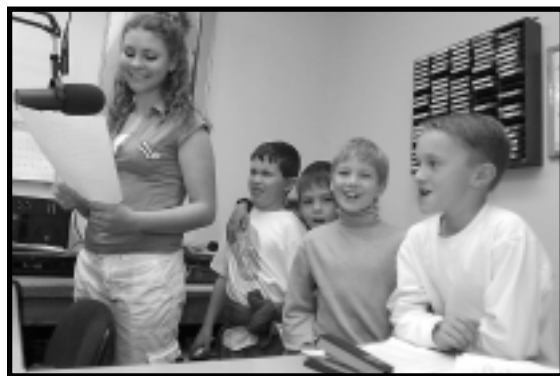
—If anyone would like a copy of our curricula or a great list of resources on media literacy and tobacco, we're happy to share. Contact Dorothy Bradshaw (457-8958) or [dbradshaw@co.lewis-clark.mt.us](mailto:dbradshaw@co.lewis-clark.mt.us) or Gail Beckner (457-8924) at the Lewis and Clark City-County Health Department.

**The AOL/Time Warner Foundation released an opinion survey showing that over 90 percent of respondents believed young people need media literacy skills to succeed in school, in work and in their communities.**

—June 25<sup>th</sup>, 2003, AOL Time/Warner Foundation Press Release.

## Tobacco Tidbits

- 90% of adult smokers took up the habit before age 18, with most kids starting between the 6th and 9th grades.
- Tobacco leaves were once used as currency. Early settlers could buy a wife for several bales of tobacco leaves.
- Tobacco companies spend over \$30 million every year on advertising in Montana alone.



Making a PSA in Lewis & Clark County.

# Refusing Underage Tobacco Sales: *A Retail Perspective*

**W**

hat is so hard about refusing underage tobacco sales? This is a question that perplexes many public health officials, enforcement officials, parents . . . and for that matter, retailers. After all, the minimum-age law is clear and retailers know the law—and the penalties—for selling tobacco to minors. Even so, minors still find ways to purchase tobacco products in retail stores. So what's the problem?

In nine years of working with the *We Card* Program, retailers have learned a great deal about the complexities of trying to prevent underage tobacco sales. Most do want to stop illegal sales. They see themselves as important parts of their communities, and their stores' reputations as critical to business success. Yet even retailers with the best intentions may find themselves receiving a citation for selling tobacco to minors. Clearly, just wanting to prevent underage sales and telling employees not to sell isn't enough.

The *We Card* Program has identified three major areas that challenge retailers.

**1. Thinking 18**—Many retailers set policies requiring employees to request ID from customers under age 27, but research shows that many clerks still ask themselves whether a customer appears "old enough" to buy tobacco. It can be extremely difficult to guess a customer's age, and clerks are likely to make mistakes if they try.

**2. Inaccurate (or nonexistent) age calculation**—Some reports suggest that while retailers ask for identification more often, they may be selling to some underage customers with ID saying the customer is underage. In some cases, a clerk may make a mistake in calculating age. Other retailers may assume that if someone hands them identification, it will verify that the customer is old enough. Retailers need to look closely at identification and take time to calculate age.

**3. Confrontation** with customers is a huge challenge when trying to prevent underage tobacco sales. Confrontational customers are a daily reality for many retailers, and it's not just about refusing underage sales. Customers are often in a hurry or need special attention. Some clerks choose the path of least resistance when dealing with customers, which can mean underage sales. Too often, retailers don't get the training they need to help them handle confrontation.

Every state, community and retailer is different. Peer pressure can be a major problem for retailers in some communities, while fake IDs or 3rd party sales may be the main concerns in others. The bottom line is that retailers need to prepare employees to deal with the situations they are likely to face at the sales counter. That is why merchant education and hands on training is so important.

Effective collaboration between community groups, state and local agencies, law enforcement and retailers makes a huge difference. Understanding the challenges that each party faces can go a long way toward creating positive actions. In Montana, collaboration between state and local enforcement officials, public health officials and the *We Card* training program has been particularly helpful to retailers. Despite our differing perspectives, we share common ground where each of us has a key role. At the end of the day, we all have the same goal: *no sales to minors*.

—For more information on the *We Card* program, visit [www.wecard.org](http://www.wecard.org)



— Retailers in Montana and nationwide are doing a much better job of refusing underage sales. According to numbers reported by the states to the Center for Substance Abuse Prevention, the national average for the retailer violation rate in FFY 1997 was 40.1 percent. In FFY 2002, the violation rate was down to 16.8 percent. In Montana, the most recent rate reported was 23.3 percent.

— We Card works hard to help retailers address the challenges of the real world. Since 1995, the We Card Program has trained more than 80,000 retailers in over 1,750 classroom training seminars across the country and has distributed more than 900,000 retail education kits. We Card also works with individual retail chains to develop ongoing training programs within their companies.

—Those of us at We Card believe that merchant education is an important piece of the overall approach to preventing underage tobacco sales.

# Preventing Tobacco Sales to Minors: *A Collaborative Approach*

By John Albrecht and Scott Neal



A young man approaches the cash register in a 7-Eleven. He seems sure of himself and asks for a pack of *Namebrand* cigarettes. The clerk begins to ring up the sale, but when the cash register reminds the clerk that cigarettes are an age-restricted product, the clerk asks for identification. The young man presents his ID and the clerk enters the birthdate in the cash register. The cash register says the young man is not old enough and refuses the sale. The young man looks somewhat disappointed, but leaves the store without an argument. A few minutes later, an adult approaches the clerk and thanks him for refusing to sell tobacco to a minor. The adult is a law enforcement officer supervising the young man.

This scene is repeated over and over across the nation today. Since 1994, states have been required to enforce laws that prohibit the sale of tobacco to minors under the age of 18 – or, in some states, 19. Under a law commonly known as the Synar Amendment, states risk losing millions of dollars in federal grants that fund alcohol and drug treatment programs unless the youth buy rate for tobacco remains at or below 20 percent. These substance abuse treatment programs are important to communities and to law enforcement agencies—often they are the only ones that will treat low income people.

It is well known that tobacco use often leads to significant health problems. A lesser-known fact is that more than 80 percent of adult smokers started before they were 18 years old. This is staggering given the research demonstrating that the earlier people begin smoking, the higher the risk of contracting lung cancer and other tobacco related health problems. If underage youth could be discouraged or prevented from starting to smoke until they are of legal age, it is likely they will never start.

Although these are good reasons to support the laws that prohibit the sale of tobacco to minors, many retailers are frustrated and resent compliance checks. Some

of this frustration may be due to a common misunderstanding that state officials want to trap retailers into selling tobacco to minors. In reality, the opposite is true, so there are a number of ways to reduce this frustration.

First, find out who your state's Synar officials are. They are always looking for ways to increase compliance and will be happy to work with tobacco merchants. Many retailers and retail organizations have found it beneficial to work with state and local authorities on merchant education to increase compliance. Retailers may also work with state enforcement authorities to develop effective merchant education tools.

Second, invite state and local enforcement officers to attend retailers' meetings to explain the state law and to answer questions regarding the tobacco compliance check program. Often, just talking with enforcement officials clears up misunderstandings about the program. State and local officials can describe procedures involved in compliance checks. Contact your state or local health department to learn which state agency is responsible for the compliance check program and work with that agency to increase compliance.

In addition to working with state officials, merchant education materials for managers and sales staff may be available from state and local law enforcement authorities. Such materials are available through the 7-Eleven Corporate office or the WE CARD program ([www.wecard.org](http://www.wecard.org) or 1-800-934-3968).

Tobacco compliance checks are important to state officials and convenience store management. Working together, the tobacco buy rate can be reduced—as can the frustration that store owners, managers and sales associates experience.

—John Albrecht is on the Chief Tobacco Counsel of the Nevada Attorney General's Office. Scott Neal is the Youth Access Manager of Public Health for Seattle and King County, Washington.

## **TIPS: Reducing Tobacco Sales to Minors**

- *Develop a policy on which customers should be asked for photo IDs (e.g., all customers appearing to be under 30).*
- *Repeatedly communicate that policy to all staff, managers and sales associates.*
- *Require all sales staff and managers to be trained in identifying younger looking customers and managing difficult customers trying to purchase age restricted products.*
- *Use point-of-sale tools such as electronic age verification devices and paper calendars.*
- *Review videotapes of cash registers to see if sales associates and managers are checking IDs among younger looking customers.*
- *If you see sales associates checking an ID for an age restricted product, thank them.*
- *Give financial incentives, such as in-store credit or cash, to sales associates who pass compliance checks.*
- *If you offer an incentive, communicate to every store employee (repeatedly) that a financial incentive is available if they pass a compliance check.*

### Want to become media literate?

Here are some questions you can ask when you see an ad, television show or movie that features smoking.

- Who is this ad/television show/movie for?
- What age group? How can you tell?
- What does this scene say about smoking?
- What does it say about people who smoke?
- What ideas or character traits are associated with smoking in the scene? If the scene was from a movie or show, did the character need to smoke so that we'd understand the story?
- Does the information in the scene address the dangers of smoking?
- Does this scene represent reality?
- Does it work—meaning does it sell the product? Why?
- How does the information in the scene compare to the facts you know about tobacco?

Extrapolate these questions to issues of nutrition, body image, drugs, alcohol, age, events in the news, anything you like. Teach your child to actively engage.

Dorothy Bradshaw, Tobacco Prevention Specialist, Lewis & Clark City-County Health Department, 1930 9th Avenue, Helena, MT 59601

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**Want to know more about the Alcohol, Tobacco and Other Drug Policy Task Force and its Comprehensive Blueprint for the Future: a Living Document? It's online! <http://www.discoveringmontana.com/gov2/css/drugcontrol/default.asp>.**

## Strategies for Success

By Deborah Neuman, Executive Director, Prevent Child Abuse, Inc.

**I**n 1989, Prevent Child Abuse, Inc., a local community-based organization, in collaboration with Bozeman schools, created the Child Advancement Project (CAP). CAP, one of the first school-based mentoring programs in the country, matches community volunteers with children grades K-12. Mentors work one-on-one with children to increase academic and social competence and to enhance opportunities for academic challenge. They provide support and encouragement, help students discover and build on individual strengths, and affirm students' abilities to shape their futures. Mentoring efforts are designed to compliment those of the teacher and the family.

The Parent Liaison Program was implemented in 1995. This parental engagement model was based on the belief that parents could effectively communicate with the schools and partner with them in problem solving. Schools have the ability to engage parents as partners in their mission to educate students. Both affect children's ability to succeed.

Parent liaisons are professionals who build relationships with and between par-

ents and teachers and who act as bridges between school and home. Parents partner with the schools to build their children's capacity. Together, parents and schools share the common goal of successful children. The Parent Liaison Program increases academic performance, school attendance,

**The Parent Liaison Program views every family as critical to the success of their children.**

positive interactions between school and family—and effective parenting. Families' abilities to access essential community resources is also improved. This allows parents to meet the family's immediate needs, freeing them to focus on the needs of their children.

The CAP and Parent Liaison programs have been recognized by the Governor's Summit on Youth Task Force and the Northwest Regional Educational Laboratory of Portland. They are part of a comprehensive approach that works in concert with school district counseling and prevention programs. This partnership weaves critical school/community resources and approaches together for a powerful impact on outcomes for children.

—For more information, contact Deborah Neuman, Executive Director, Prevent Child Abuse, Inc., Bozeman, Montana, (406-587-3840) phone or by e-mail at [dneuman@bridgeband.com](mailto:dneuman@bridgeband.com).

## Meth Summit

**G**overnor Martz will host *Cracking Down On Meth*, a Methamphetamine Summit, on June 1-3, 2004, at the Mansfield Health Education Center in Billings. The Summit agenda provides for the exploration of policy options and strategies to reduce the production, distribution and use of methamphetamine. The focus is to develop comprehensive statewide strategies in the areas of courts, drug endangered children, treatment, prevention, public awareness, environmental clean-up and law enforcement.

Governor Martz is reconvening the Alcohol, Tobacco and Other Drug Policy Task Force during the Summit in recogni-

tion of their work to address this issue in a comprehensive manner in 2002. The National Crime Prevention Council will facilitate the Summit, and will build on the original Task Force recommendations. They will use an integrated approach that reaches across prevention, enforcement, intervention and treatment lines to create a comprehensive strategy.

There will be room for 200 attendees, with registrations taken on a limited, first-come, first-serve basis. Registration materials will be available on the Governor's website in late April or early May. For more information, contact Jean Branscum, the Governor's Human Services and Corrections Policy Advisor, at 406-444-3111 or by e-mail at [jabranscum@state.mt.us](mailto:jabranscum@state.mt.us).

Keep an eye on the web for updates and registration materials: <http://state.mt.us/gov2/default.asp>

# The X / Y Factor

By Andrea Simon, Prevention Resource Center VISTA Leader

**G**enerations X and Y range in age from five to thirty-five and they're over a hundred million strong. They are also the most culturally diverse group to ever hit the planet.

Their most consistent babysitter was the television; they played Atari video games and had the first Apple computers at their fingertips. As post Baby Boomers, X grew up with the *Me Generation* and saw all the pitfalls that entailed. Generation X was the most media savvy generation in history until Generation Y hit the scene.

Generation Y is the tech head generation, PCs and *Macs*, cell phones, *IPODs*, and *X Boxes* rule the roost. Plastic surgery and Reality TV are commonplace. Born between 1981-1994, Gen Y communicates in a language foreign to their grandparents, via chat rooms, text messages and emails.

Both Generation X and Y have powerful voices. They intuit the world around them from an evolved point of view that can be measured by their fiery spirits. They are also reawakening the spirit of volunteerism—70 percent of young people ages 15-21 volunteer. They want the truth from their parents, peers, educators and the media. They are not willing to deny what lies before them or what happened in the past. As the Xers move into their late 20s and early 30s, they have paved the way for their younger brothers and sisters and are now making room to work beside them. Generation X has been called aloof and apolitical. They are called materialistic and individualistic. Generation Y has been described in similar fashion.

Marketing to the Baby Boomers was easy—they bought into simple slogans that played to their self images and allowed the American Dream to shape their ideals. They did not ask to see representatives from different cultural groups. Baby Boomers accepted the faces that were presented to them, even if the face did not reflect their own images.

This is not the case with X and Y. They have been watching television since the

womb and put their hands on the keyboard to access the Internet before they could walk. Generation X and Y thrive on constant stimulation. Color, design, and truth, truth, nothing but the truth is what they expect from the market place. Because collectively they make up the largest constituent in our population, advertisers had better take heed.

*Can marketers provide the bait?*

When it comes to the media and hooking X and Y, some Baby Boom focused entities are drowning. Celebrities, gimmicks and lies don't sell. Because generations X and Y have been given considerable financial responsibility—including credit card debt, often by the ninth grade—they are buying from an informed point of view. X and Y will largely support those who market honestly and appeal to their styles and needs. They want creativity with bold statements and faces that represent diverse cultures and eclectic groups.

Marketers have to reevaluate and re-adjust best business practices. The threat of closing up shop has become a reality. Fear-based marketing doesn't do the trick with people this sophisticated, responsible and well educated. These generations have an evolved sense of self and know what they want and need from life. Advertisers will survive

if they are willing to change, beginning with hiring these young hipsters—listening and doing their best to understand.

Across the board, more cohesive partnerships between generations need to be formed. Hopefully, these relationships will lead to truth and understanding—not just in the marketplace but in life. Understanding builds bridges and closes gaps. Lack of understanding won't sell *Nike* shoes or *Levi* jeans—nor will it do anyone any good.

*—Andrea Simon is a VISTA Leader with the Prevention Resource Center in Helena. She is finishing her service years and will head to Washington D.C to continue her career in public relations and marketing. She graduated with a BA in African American Studies from Indiana University and has a Master's degree in Culture and Spirituality. Her dreams include spreading peace throughout the world and traveling as far and as widely as possible.*

**Generations X and Y see life as it "really" is, not as they are told to see it. They want to share their vision.**

## We're sorry!

**All of our hard copy subscriptions are currently spoken for and at present, new subscriptions can only be acquired by signing up on our web site. Additional copies can also be downloaded on our web site. For more information, visit [www.state.mt.us/prc](http://www.state.mt.us/prc)**

## Can you help?

**If your agency is receiving more than one copy of the Prevention Connection, please let us know! Send a note to [Gygelinas@state.mt.us](mailto:Gygelinas@state.mt.us).**

## References:

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# Taking the Sting Out of the *Sting*

By Lisa Posada-Griffin, Prevention Coordinator, Billings Police Department

The concept of law enforcement and alcohol merchants working together was introduced in Atlanta at the National Leadership Conference sponsored by the Office of Juvenile Justice and Delinquency Prevention (OJJDP) in September 2003. Sergeant Tony Barone and Lisa Posada-Griffin, Prevention Coordinator, presented a workshop entitled: Identifying Underage Buyers: Alcohol Merchants as the First Line of Defense. This Minor Alcohol Prevention Program is now being used as a model within the state and across the country.

**The Sting: A compliance check is an operation in which an individual under legal drinking age (21), working with the police department, enters an establishment and attempts to purchase alcohol. The underage buyer is only allowed to carry his/her own valid Montana Drivers License and marked "buy money." If alcohol is sold to the underage buyer, a Police Officer immediately issues a criminal citation (MCA 45-5-623) to the seller and an administrative citation is issued by the Montana Department of Revenue to the establishment's licensee. Alcohol merchants termed these operations "the Sting."**

**I**n September 2000, the Billings Police Department established Montana's first Minor Alcohol Prevention Program. Funded through the Montana Board of Crime Control's *Enforcing Underage Drinking Laws* grant, this program focused on three main objectives: community mobilization, point of purchase compliance checks and alcohol merchant training. Each objective came with its own rewards and challenges. For the City of Billings, the greatest challenge was developing a respectable working relationship between law enforcement and the alcohol industry.

This relationship wasn't born friendly! Traditionally, this dyad is not one of cooperation, much less collaboration. It took a considerable amount of talking and listening before trust developed between these parties. To further complicate the process, the police department was conducting *Point of Purchase Compliance Checks*. The intended purpose of compliance checks, from the perspective of the alcohol merchants was greatly misunderstood. Hence, tense relationship with law enforcement.

Not only are there monetary consequences of stings, but the media is involved. There is nothing quite like negative press to gain the attention of a target audience. The results of the compliance checks—then and now—are printed in the *Billings Gazette* and reported on local television. For the establishments in compliance, the press proved positive, but the noncompliant establishments did not relish the negative publicity. The Billings Police Department responded to complaints from the alcohol merchants by providing the education needed to comply with the law.

As a result of initial compliance checks, media coverage, and a motivated alcohol industry, we developed the *Identifying Underage Buyers* training seminar. The

police department prevention coordinator communicated with alcohol merchants to determine the information and tools needed to assure alcohol would not be sold to minors. For the past three years, the Billings Police Department has offered ongoing trainings in Billings, Yellowstone County and throughout the state. The curriculum is provided in a *train the trainers* format that teaches owners and managers how to educate their employees on a range of topics including:

- policy and procedures;
- laws and liabilities;
- identifying fake IDs; and
- how to refuse a sale.

To date more than 500 alcohol merchants have attended the *Identifying Underage Buyers* Training Seminars. Since Sep-

**In the early stages, the relationship between law enforcement and retailers could be compared to a porcupine courtship—a bit prickly.**

tember 2000, 459 Billings-area alcohol establishments have been checked for compliance, with a compliance rate ranging from 30-100 percent. The current overall average is 58.8 percent. Progress has been achieved, but work remains to be done.

Through sheer determination and mutual commitment, the Billings Police Department now works in tandem with local alcohol merchants to discourage underage drinking and to reduce youth access to alcohol. Alcohol merchants have come to understand that compliance checks are designed to keep community members accountable, informed and safe. The Billings Police Department has become a resource for education and information in the effort to keep compliance rates high. The desire to reduce underage drinking is a common goal *shared* by law enforcement and alcohol merchants. As a result of this collaborative effort, the sting was taken out of "the Sting."

—For information on conducting Compliance Checks contact: Sgt. Tony Barone, Billings Police Department, 657-8459, baronet@ci.billings.mt.us

—For information on the Identifying Underage Buyers Training Seminars contact: Lisa Posada-Griffin, Prevention Coordinator, Billings Police Department, 896-8181, posada123griffin@covad.net

# HEAD: *the Target*

By Tony Hines

Ask any quick-draw cowgirl what a target is, and she's apt to say, "That thing you shoot at."

**A**sk marketing folks what a target is, and you may get a thousand answers filled with fancy jargon, but you will never get an answer as good as, "That thing you shoot at." So keep that in mind: your target is the person you're "shooting at" with your advertising, public relations and other marketing activities.

Off the top of your head, you may say your target is potential donors, volunteers or the general public. There's nothing wrong with any of those answers, but they only scratch the surface.

We need to dig deeper. We need to define what makes your intended audience tick. We need to delve into their minds. To do that, we need to work with some graphic words: *geographics*, *demographics* and *psychographics*.

- **Geographics:** This refers to the specific regions you'll address. Geographically, you may need to address an audience as broad as "all of Western Montana" or it may be "Yellowstone and Carbon counties." You may need to get even more specific. Maybe you want to reach people in the 59102, 59105 and 59107 zip codes in the City of Billings.
- **Demographics:** Demographics refer to patterns of characteristics within a population such as age, sex, race, household income, profession and so on. This includes a lot of the data the Census Bureau collects, which you can access at [www.census.gov](http://www.census.gov).
- **Psychographics:** Demographics are general population characteristics; psychographics reflect lifestyle and attitude. Psychographic data tells us about interests, hobbies, likes and dislikes, political outlook, shopping habits, brand preferences, and so on. In other words, this is *qualitative* rather than quantitative data.

Whoa. *Quantitative*? *Qualitative*? That sounds suspiciously like the jargon I warned you about earlier. Nah. Basically, think of quantitative data as anything that deals with *quantity*: statistical categories that tell you *how many* people live within Lewistown, and of those, how many own

homes, and of those, how many also own two cars. Qualitative data, as you might guess, deals with *quality* issues. These are more touchy feely and get at what someone thinks, feels or perceives.

"Great," you're saying, "but I can't just pull all this stuff out of the air. I need to find out what geographic, demographic and psychographic areas I should be targeting in the first place."

Fair enough. I'll give you a good place to start: the people you've already reached. If you want to know what the ideal donor looks like, take a look at someone who has given you money. Trying to find out who's likely to volunteer? Look at your current volunteers. If you know who you're working with, you'll have a much easier time deciding how to reach new people. After all, it's a good bet that your best prospective audience will have a lot in common with your current audience.

The question is, *how can you know what your typical target is like*? If you don't know, ask. Design a short questionnaire—10 questions or so—that asks key information about your audience. Start with the name, address, profession and e-mail address, which you will use for your database. After that, find out about their media consumption habits: Do they subscribe to the local newspaper? Which radio stations do they listen to? Which television programs do they watch? Go for a few qualitative questions next. What are their favorite hobbies or activities? What other non-profit organizations do they support? You get the idea. Now, sit down and analyze the information you get from the questionnaires. You'll see patterns emerge, and you'll get a good idea of what your audience looks like.

Once you start getting a better idea of what your audience looks like, you'll know what you're shooting at—which will, in turn, keep you from shooting your own foot.

—Tony Hines has a 15-year history in advertising and marketing, creating communications for organizations as varied as the Montana Tobacco Quit Line, Hold on to Dear Life (Seat Belt Campaign), the Utah Immunization Project, Taco Time International and the North Face. He is the Creative Director of Wendt/Billings at 406-259-4546, or online at [www.iwendt.com](http://www.iwendt.com).

## **mpower: musicians for mental health**

*In October 2003, the National Mental Health Association (NMHA) launched "mpower: musicians for mental health," a national youth awareness campaign harnessing the power of music to raise awareness about mental health and substance abuse issues. Mpower also encourages teens to seek help when they need it.*

*"Music inspires, motivates and often serves as a catalyst for social change," said Michael Faenza, president and CEO of the National Mental Health Association. "One in five young people have a diagnosable mental health problem, but more than two-thirds do not get the help they need. By working with musicians on mpower, we can really get the word out to America's youth that mental health matters."*

*To kick off the campaign, NMHA unveiled [mpoweryouth.org](http://mpoweryouth.org), a website that provides a forum where teens can share their stories and which features messages from top musicians on the importance of mental health. Through concerts, special events, media outreach, PSAs and educational forums, mpower's supporting artists and youth leaders will raise awareness about mental health and substance abuse.*

# The Last Word

By Joan Cassidy, Bureau Chief  
Chemical Dependency Bureau

**L**istening is learning. For this reason, the Addictive and Mental Disorders leadership held a series of meetings around the state in January and February of this year. At each one, we heard ideas from community members about how we could improve the mental health and chemical dependency systems in Montana. We talked about everything from funding sources to Medicaid redesign, from developing services around co-occurring mental health and substance abuse disorders to unmet local needs.

A number of concerns were consistent statewide. We learned that we need to establish better communication. There is a general lack of awareness about the services we can provide, and how to access them—particularly around co-occurring disorders. It came through loud and clear

that we need more crisis stabilization and detoxification services.

We know that if access to addiction treatment isn't immediate, we lose people . . . and we know that there is often a 2–3 week waiting period to get into these services. Often, when community based services aren't readily available, people wind up at higher cost, in-patient facilities. What that *tells* us is that we need to concentrate on workforce development. There is a limited pool of licensed addictions counselors and numerous programs and agencies vie for their services. We've become more sophisticated in providing treatment, but we also need to provide more sophisticated training to help those practicing in the field keep their skills up to date.

These are all big issues—training, co-occurring disorders and detoxification—but ultimately it comes down to looking at the client. We need to really *see* the severity of the problems that a particular client is coming in with, problems that can pose barriers to service. For example, statistically, methamphetamine addiction is not the primary addiction problem in Montana

and yet the multiple issues that walk hand-in-hand with this drug are legion.

We also heard about many of the things that *are* working. Research and science-based programming are key. In many areas, we are at the beginning of research that will lead to new evidence-based practices. We're also seeing science-based practices working in the field. The recovery homes and the mother's and children's homes are helping people regain their lives. They're addressing the needs of the whole person, and in many cases, the whole family. They provide housing, teach parenting skills, treat co-occurring disorders and provide access to wraparound services much longer than the traditional 90 days. And they are making a huge difference in people's lives.

Perhaps one of the most important things that happened during the listening tour is that we started a conversation. We need to talk about the continuum that starts with prevention and goes through treatment—and we need to keep talking about it.

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